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Toast for Tea

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A LITTLE BUDGET
OF
HOME STORIES



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A LITTLE BUDGET OF HOME STORIES

Toast for Tea

Billy didn't waste a moment when he got out of school.

He wanted everything to be just right to-day, and the really "rightest" thing would be hot-buttered toast for tea.

His feet never stopped till they reached his own front door.

He opened it gently. Hurrah, there was no sound of visitors!

As he pushed open the sitting-room door, the very first "sniff" made a smile dance to his face.

There was going to be toast!

Stuffing his gloves into his coat pocket he went right in. Yes, everything was just as he had wanted it. The table, with the tea-tray, was waiting to be pulled over to the fire, and his mother was toasting bread in front of the glowing coal, with the firelight gleaming on her pretty red frock and shiny brown hair.

"Tea's almost ready, dear," she said, smiling. "Run and take your coat off. But what's the matter?" for Billy's face had suddenly clouded.

"It's—it's the toast," he stammered. "I—I did hope it would be hot-buttered."

"Is that all?" she laughed. "I'll make this slice hot for you now, so hurry up!"

"Now," said his mother presently, "out with the secret!"

"How did you guess?" he gasped.

Mrs. Walton laughed. "I know you've got something nice to tell me," she said, "you look so excited and happy."

"Well, so I am," he admitted. "You see, I'm to get the medal for top boy in the form."

His mother's eyes shone. "Yes," he added, "but it wouldn't have seemed half so good, if there hadn't been toast for tea."

A Game of Shadows

Frank and Freda, whose n
sery was at the top of a tall ho
in a noisy street, had n
spoken to Jack and Jessie,
lived in a nursery high u
another tall house opposite.

Now and then Frank
Freda had a chance of pl
a shadow-game to amuse
and Jessie. This was wh
nurse lighted the nursery
and drew down the blind
Jack's and Jessie's nur
still unlighted and its bl

When Jack and Jessie
lighted window opposite,
to their own window and



A Show across the Street

And, as a rule, they did not wait long before they saw, upon the white blind, some strange shadows which made them laugh. For Frank and Freda, after peeping under the blind to see if their little friends were looking,

would push the big table under the window and clamber upon it. Then they would act some funny scene, standing close to the blind, so that their shadows might fall upon it. Sometimes they played at being Jack and Jill. At other times they would pretend to be Punch and Judy, or Clown and Pantaloon, or Mother Hubbard and her dog.

Jack and Jessie would tap on their window to show how pleased they were with the game. Frank and Freda could not hear the taps, but that did not matter because the actors were already quite pleased with themselves.

Party Shoes

There was trouble in the Shoe Cupboard. Of course, it was all the fault of the Party Shoes—they had such a horrid way of showing off!

"Really, I should hate any of my best friends to see the company I have to mix with now," remarked the Right Party Shoe loftily, to the Brown Brogues. "You're a positive disgrace, all scratched and any old shape."

"I call them positively *low*," chimed in the Left Party Shoe.

"I know we're not all bright an' shiny like you," they agreed sadly, "but we're very useful—

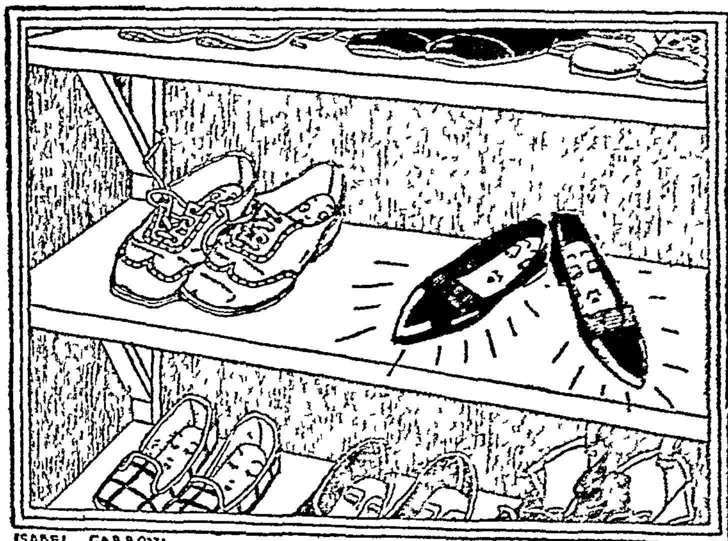
and—and—comfy. Peter's mother says 'bout the useful part—and Peter 'bout the comfy part."

"Pooh, useful! Who cares about being useful when they can be beautiful! And as to being comfy, we're just as comfy as you," declared the Party Shoes.

"We're going to a party to-day," went on the Right Party Shoe. "It's going to be ever such a fine party. There'll be games an' dancin'. *You've* never been to a party in your life," wound up the Right Party Shoe with a loud sniff.

The poor little Brown Brogues gulped down a sob.

"No, we've never been to a



Very conceited

party," they agreed, "but we went to a picnic last summer."

"Ho! what's a silly picnic compared with a real party," jeered the Party Shoes rudely.

The little Brown Brogues shrank farther back in the dark cupboard and tried to pretend they weren't there.

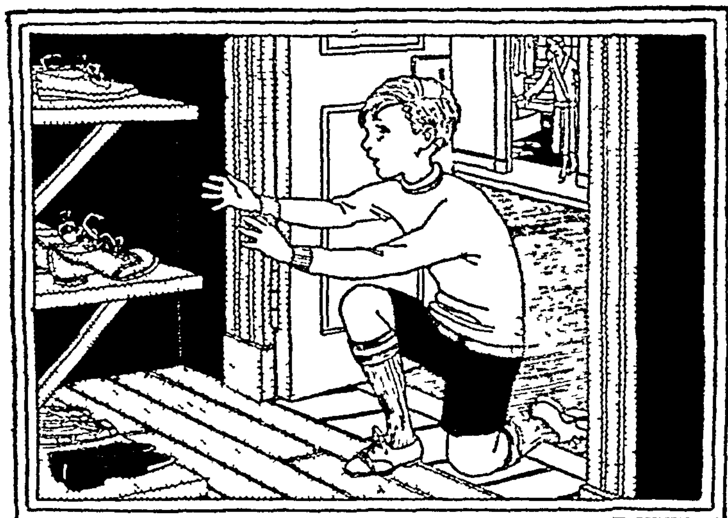
How they wished somebody would make a fuss over them!

They certainly were shabby. There were funny dark marks on their faces—they got them the day Peter walked home in the puddles. And they were terribly scratched—most of the scratches happened that other day when Peter pretended a stone was a football.

The cupboard door opened and a pair of small brown hands felt about in the dark.

"Here they are, Mummy!" called out Peter, and grabbed hold of the Party Shoes.

"Ha! ha! now for the party," whispered the Party Shoes to the Brown Brogues, and winked.



"Here they are!"

When the cupboard door closed again the little Brown Brogues burst into tears—they couldn't be brave any longer. It was *too* bad they could never have any fun. They cried themselves to sleep.

It was daylight when the Party Shoes had come back again.

"Well, did you have a

good time?" they asked politely.

"A good time! I should think so indeed. Everybody admired us and said——"

But they got no further.

The cupboard door burst open and again a pair of small hand felt eagerly about in the dark.

"Here they are, Mummy!" cried Peter excitedly, draggin out the Brown Brogues. "Shal I want my Party Shoes too?"

"Oh, no, darling, certainl not. Party Shoes are *no good* fo the Seaside."

The Left Brown Brogue onl just had time to put out its tong at the Party Shoes before Pet banged the door on them!

The Uninvited Guest

" Another wet day!" grumbled Rosy. " Whatever shall we do? Cook says she positively will not give us any more raisins or lemon peel this week, and there is no fun in playing at shops with only rice and tapioca. You can't eat them afterwards."

" It's a pity we burnt the hearth-rug yesterday," said Posy, " for now I suppose Mother won't let us make toffee again. Why not have a doll's washing?"

" The very thing!" cried Rosy. " Look at Constance; her petticoats are awful! And Polly-Mary

hasn't had a clean frock on for a fortnight. You bring the bedroo wash-bowl, and I'll get water an soap from the bathroom."

The next half-hour was happy one. Rosy and Po y soused and rinsed and splashe to their hearts' content. Whe they had washed all the dolls clothes, Rosy had the bright ide of washing their own pinafores "It will save Nurse the trouble,' she said.

But Nurse scolded them all th time she was drying the floor an changing their clothes. "Why can't you play nice tidy games?" she asked crossly. "Get out yo dolls' tea-set and have a party."



A Happy Half-hour

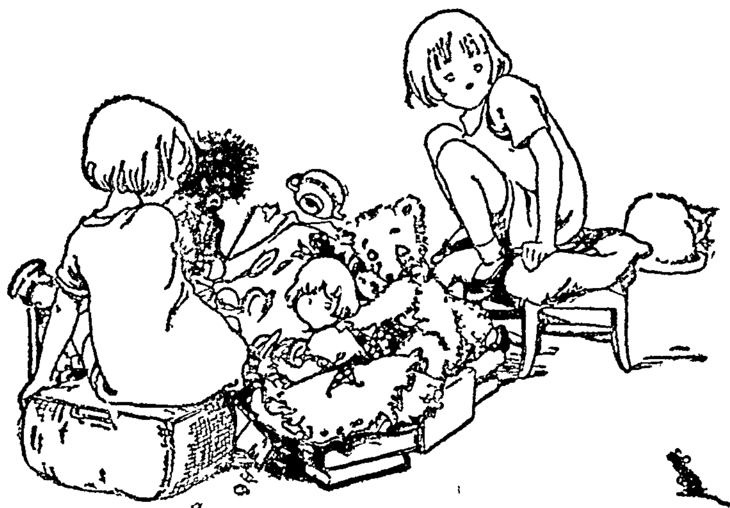
Rosy and Posy thought a tea-party would be very good fun, and they were as happy as queens until the time came for inviting the guests. Rosy began arranging the dolls round the little table. "Constance must have the best seat," she said; "and Polly-

Mary must come, of course; and Golliwog, and Tommy Atkins."

"But my dear Teddy Bear must certainly be invited," Posy protested, "and my White Pussy too. I love them more than Constance."

"Well," said Rosy, "I suppose Teddy may come, because he's almost half a doll; but whoever heard of asking a cat to a tea-party?"

Posy had no answer ready, so she gave in, very unwillingly, and the party began. The guests sat still, and were very polite, though Golliwog kept on wanting more tea. Rosy was just pouring out his fifteenth cup, when sud-



" *Whatever shall we do?*"

denly she dropped the teapot, overturned the table, and sprang on to her chair, shrieking: " A mouse! A mouse!"

There was a terrible scene. Golliwog just yelled. Tommy Atkins turned giddy with fear. Polly-Mary tried to fling herself into Teddy's arms. Poor Con-

stance did not dare to faint, because she was wearing her party frock.

"Oh, it's coming nearer!" shrieked Posy, too frightened to move. "It's eating the sugar and cake! Whatever shall we do?"

Then all at once the mouse sat up. It gave one glance into the far corner of the room, where White Pussy was sitting all alone, and then, with a wild squeak of fear, it vanished into its hole.

When the tea-table was arranged once more, it was the White Pussy who was placed in the seat of honour.

A Wet Morning

How fast it rained!

" Oh dear!" cried Peggy. " We can't go out."

" And there's nothing to do," said Pat, " 'cos Mother said there was no room to pack toys in the trunks."

" Dear me!" laughed big Cousin Hilda. " Surely there is something, even in seaside lodgings, to make a toy of. Look in the cupboard, Pat."

Pat looked. " Nothing 'cept a lemon and some old corks," said he.

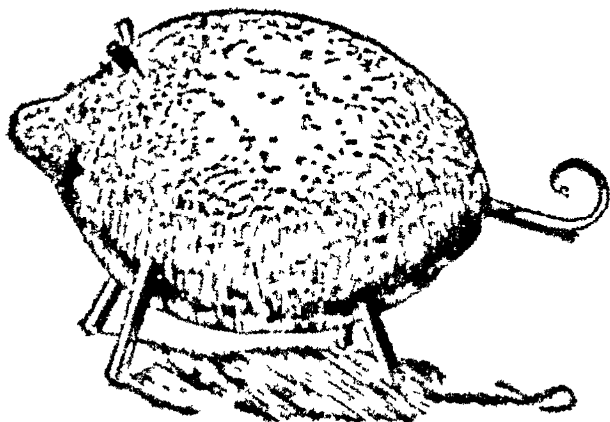
" Lemon and corks! Splen-

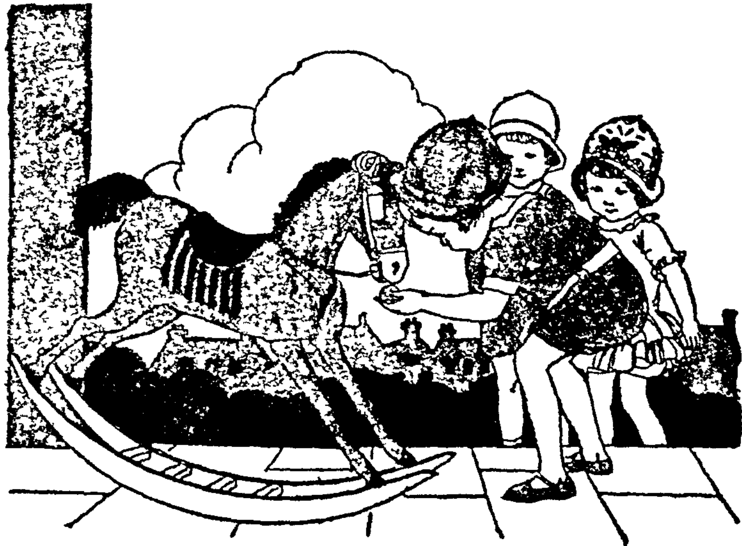
did!" cried Hilda. "Bring them out! And, Peggy, give me those burnt matches from the candle-stick."

When all these things were on the table, Hilda set to work. First, with her pocket-knife, she cut four pieces of match, an inch long, and made a sharp point at one end of each. Next she stuck those matches into one side of the lemon, as in the picture. Then she sent Peggy to find two black pins; and, while the little girl was away, made a sharp point at one end of another piece of match, and shaved the other end so fine that it curled up. After that the curly piece of match was stuck

into the rounder end of the lemon; and, lastly, the black pins were stuck, one on either side of its pointed end, with two short pieces of match above them.

"Why, it's a pig!" shouted Peggy and Pat, laughing.





The Dobbin

As soon as Ricky saw the wooden horse he liked him.

" *That!*" mocked Prudence. " That's only a Dobbin."

" Why?" said Ricky.

" All wooden horses are Dobbins. Look at this one, Ricky, with the real brown skin,

and this, with the little grey rings. They're just like real ones."

"They aren't," said Ricky. "The brown one is too small, and the grey one's half a tricycle. I like the Dobbin best. I could get on his back."

That was quite true.

"I wish he was mine," said Ricky.

"Don't say that to Uncle Dick," said Owen. "Look at this little motor-car, Ricky. It's just like a real one. You can sit inside, and move it on with your feet, and toot on the horn."

Uncle Dick always gave the children a present when he came to stay in the summer, a big

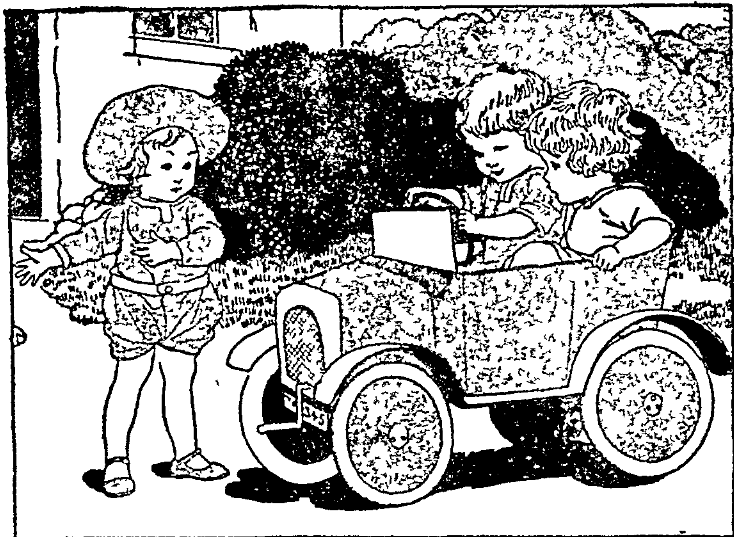
present, to be shared by all three, and often he tried to find out what they would really like to have.

" You couldn't say you wanted that, Owen," said Prudence. " It's heaps too expensive."

" I know," said Owen. " But, all the same, Ricky needn't say he likes that Dobbin. You'd rather have a car, you know you would, Ricky."

" I wouldn't," said Ricky. " I'd like the Dobbin."

But, as it happened, Uncle Dick brought his present with him. It was just what Owen wanted, and Prudence liked, too—a little motor-car with a real



Ricky was the Policeman

horn. There was room for two in it, if they squashed up tight, and one could trundle round the pedals and one could toot on the horn.

"You can be the policeman holding up his hand," Owen told Ricky.

" But he must drive sometimes," said Prudence. " You must let him have a turn, Owen —him and me."

Ricky had a turn, now and then, but still he thought about the Dobbin. Every time he went past the toy-shop he nipped up on the step and stroked the Dobbin's mane, and spoke to him. Sometimes he offered him a bit of apple, or an acid drop.

" Put your apple in your pocket while you're walking along the street, Ricky," said his mother to him one day.

" It takes so long to get it out," said Ricky.

" He wants to give a bit to the

Dobbin," explained Prudence.

"What Dobbin? Where?"

"I'll show you," said Ricky. But, when they got to the shop, the Dobbin had gone.

Ricky felt very sad.

"I'll never see him again," he said.

"Cheer up," said his mother. "There's more than one Dobbin in the world."

Ricky walked home without saying any more, and slowly went up to the nursery. Then—his heart just jumped up with joy, and he stood quite still, staring.

There was the Dobbin, red saddle, blue stripes, yellow reins, all complete.

" Yes, he's yours," said Uncl
Dick. " Not much fun in a twc
seater for three, is there? Bu
perhaps they'll give you a
in it sometimes."

" I don't want one," sai
Ricky. " I'd rather have th
Dobbin than anything in th
world."

He got on to the red saddle.

" He's glad to be here, and to be mine," he said. " Aren't you, old chap?"

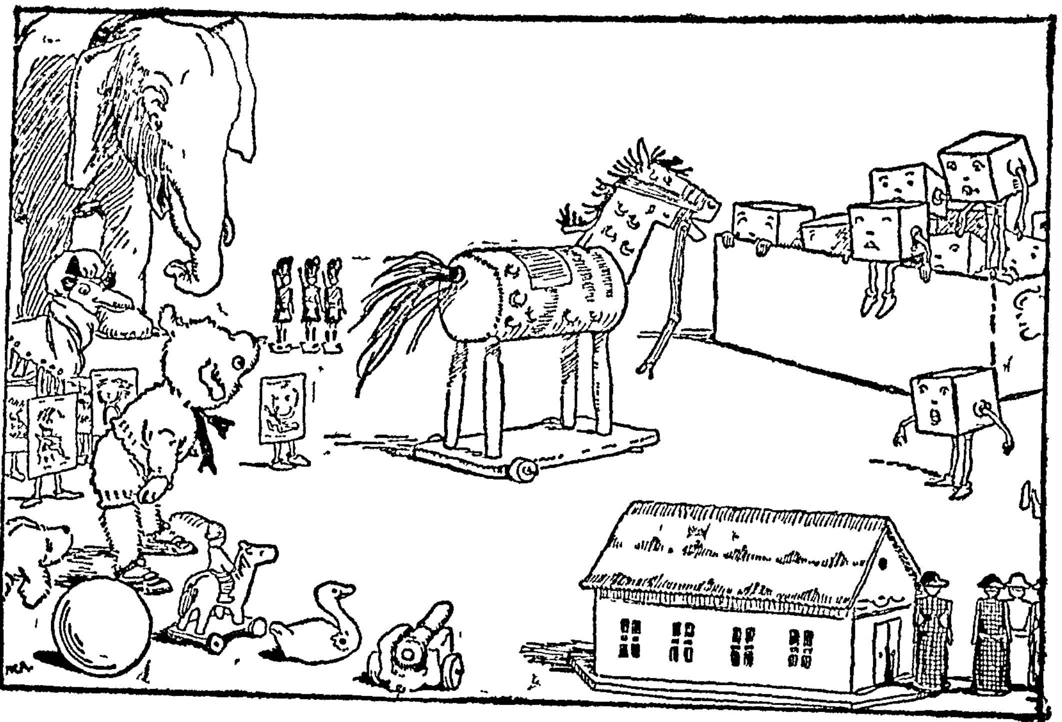
The Dobbin made no sign, but perhaps he was.

The Toy Engine

The toy engine was quite the most important toy in the nursery. The other toys were just a little bit afraid of him. They said to each other humbly: "The engine is certainly the finest thing ever known!"

At last, one day, a box of bricks arrived.

"I will tell them about the engine," said the spotted horse, trotting over to the bricks. "Oh, Box of Bricks," he began politely, "we toys bid you welcome. But there is one among us, an engine, who is by far the finest toy in



The Horse tells the Bricks

the nursery, and you must never, never get in his way."

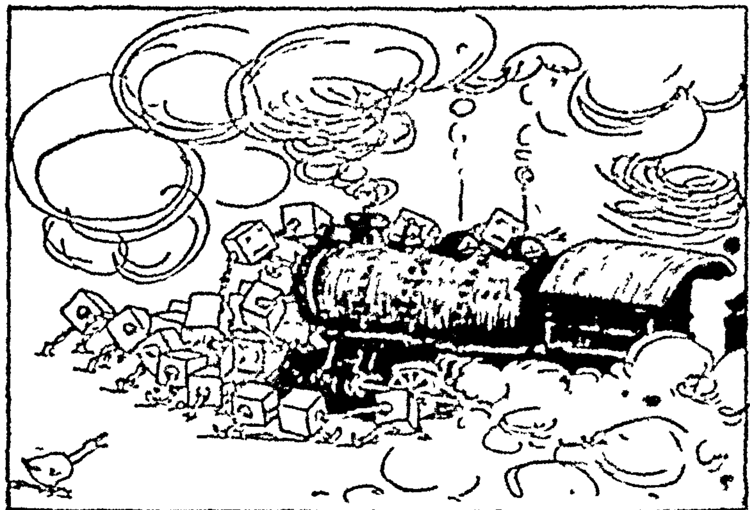
" But why?" asked the bricks.

" He can run by himself," said the horse, "and puff out steam, and he has got the most splendid carriages."

" H'm!" answered the bricks, meaning they did not care a jot for the engine and all his carriages. Then one bold brick hissed out: " We will defy him!" and the others muttered: " Hear! hear!"

So war began, and when next the engine came along the bricks heaped themselves up in his path.

" Get out of *my* way!" he bellowed, but the bricks did not move.



The Engine runs into the Bricks

"I shall run over you!" screamed the engine. But the bricks knew that if they kept close together he could never knock them down, so they just waited.

Nearer and nearer came the engine, shrieking louder and louder, till he banged right into the bricks and stuck there, where

his master, Gerald, found him.

After this the rest of the toys began to love the bricks for their bravery.

Then, one day, Gerald marched into the nursery and picked up the engine, saying: " I am going to take you for a journey."

This pleased the engine mightily. " Ha!" he called to the rest of the toys. " What did I tell you? I am the one chosen for this adventure!"

Yes, but little did he know what was going to happen. No sooner had they got to the station than Gerald went up to a *real* engine and held up his toy. " Now you can see what a *real*

engine looks like," he said.

The toy engine suddenly felt very, very small.

"That huge creature an engine!" he thought. "Then I am not the finest after all."

When he came back to the nursery, he was a very different toy. He no longer kept apart, nor went about shouting: "Keep out of my way." No, he had learnt that there were engines even bigger than himself, and so he became humble like the rest of the toys, and made friends with them all, especially with the bricks, and ever after this there was peace in the nursery.

THE FOLLOWING STAR



Once upon a time a lovely big star peeped up from behind a tall dark hill and looked at the world. It saw a little boy walking home with his father.

"Why," said the star, "I'm glad I came early to-night, before that nice little boy went to bed! I think I'll just walk home with him."

And the little boy, who had

golden-yellow hair, and blue eyes just the colour of the forget-me-nots that grow in your garden, watched the big star.

After a little he said: " Oh, Daddy! Just look! That nice star is brighter than all the others, and it looks so happy! It keeps peeping over the hills, and I do believe it's following us!"

So his father said: " Perhaps it's your star. Let's watch it, just for fun."

They walked a long way, up a hill, past a lot of very tall trees, past a farmhouse, and the star kept looking at them all the time.

" Do you think it will follow us till we come to the seashore,

Daddy?" the little boy asked; and sure enough, in a little while they saw it shining across the sea at them.

"I believe it *is* my star, Daddy! It shines right over the water just to where I am, and it never shines anywhere else. But I wonder how it knows me."

"Why," said his father, "wise men used to say that every little boy has a star for his very own, and every little girl too. All the stars are good, they said, and each one knows the little boy or the little girl it belongs to. They never make mistakes, and they are always watchful and kind. Just now your star is following

you, but when you are older you will have to follow it—at least that's what the wise men said.

" Yours is a beautiful star, and, if you always look up and follow it, it will keep you as good as even Mother wishes you to be. You can't guess what beautiful things your star may take you to, some day.

" Long ago the wise men followed a star, and nobody has really forgotten the story they told about it. Now I'll tell you their story, but some day your star will tell you in its own way much better than Daddy can."

Fireman's Drill

John could dress himself now that he was five years old, but it took him rather a long time. Even if no accident happened, he played about or lost things, and was hardly ever ready in time.

"Breakfast's ready," Mummy would call up the stairs, and John would have to call back:

"But *I'm* not *nearly* ready."

"I can't find my other slipper," was about the nearest he ever was.

Sometimes Mummy had to come up to help him, and John knew that was a pity, because

there was hardly time to see Daddy before he went to catch his train to the office.

Mummy told John he really must be quicker, and he always meant to try, but somehow he used to forget.

Then, one Saturday afternoon, John went for a walk with Daddy—not a country walk, but a town walk, because Daddy wanted to call at a shop. John liked both kinds of walk, but this Saturday afternoon he decided that the town walk was certainly the most exciting. There were such lots of things to see—trams and 'buses and motors; then there was the sound of a loud bell, and the fire-



"I can't find my other slipper."

engine went rushing by. That was the most exciting of all.

“ I believe I would really rather be a fireman than an engine-driver, when I'm a man, Daddy,” said John.

“ Well, John,” said Daddy, “ the first thing you'd have to learn would be how to get on

your clothes quickly," a
explained how quick the m
to be getting to a fire.
they passed the Fire Statio·
doors were open, and D
showed John where the
special jackets and helmets '
—all ready to be slipped o
a minute when the signal f
fire was given.

" They keep on practising
quick they can possibly b
Daddy told John; " and,
then, they sometimes have
finish dressing as the fire-eng
is going along."

" But suppose their helmets
lost, as my things do?" ask
John.

"They never do get lost, John, because it is a rule for them always to be kept in the same place. If a fireman did lose his helmet, he would get into dreadful trouble—in fact, he might be told that he couldn't be a fireman any more."

"Oh," said John seriously, "I'm afraid I shouldn't do for a fireman, then."

But Daddy said that perhaps the firemen used to be slow dressing, and sometimes lost their things when they were little boys, but that they kept on trying to be quick until they could manage it.

John thought that was a good idea, and the next morning he was very careful not to upset the

tidy heap of his clothes, so that nothing got lost. He tried to dress a little bit *too* quickly, so that some of the things went wrong, and had to be done again. But he soon got into the way of doing things right and quickly too, and now Mummy and Daddy say he is " nearly as quick as a fireman getting dressed ". Mummy always says " Fireman's Drill, John!" when it is time for him to get up, so that it reminds him not to be slow any more.

Mrs. Thompson's Daughter

"Coo! oh my!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson's daughter—her real name was Elsie, but almost everybody called her "Mrs. Thompson's daughter"—as she watched the furniture removers puffing and blowing under the weight of a lovely grand piano.

Mrs. Thompson's daughter had always been interested in No. 47 in the same road as her own home, and now at last this house, which had been empty for so long, was to be occupied; and more than that, to be actually occupied by people who owned such a won-



A Grand Piano

derful thing as a grand piano.

As the men and the piano disappeared inside the house Mrs. Thompson's daughter galloped off home to spread the good news.

After tea that same evening, the family discovered that Elsie was not at home.

Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Thompson, Mr. Jack Thompson, Mr. Jerry Thompson, and Tweeny—the maid—ran about all over the place to try and find her, but eight o'clock came, then nine o'clock struck on the old grandfather clock in the hall, and still Mrs. Thompson's daughter was " not at home ".

Mr. Thompson was just about to telephone the police station, when Mrs. Thompson suddenly remembered her daughter's prattle about the " grand piano ".

" I wouldn't mind giving anything that she is at No. 47," said Mrs. Thompson, in the funny way mothers have. " I remember

now that the milkman told me that the new people at No. 47 were not actually arriving to occupy the house until to-morrow; I expect she is playing on that grand piano."

So, of course, the whole family put on their coats and hats and went along to No. 47.

They were several houses away when they heard the strains of th "Bluebells of Scotland" floatin through the still night air, playe in that jerky way that M Thompson's daughter had.

So her mother knew she ha been quite correct in her guess.

They arrived at No. 47 an discovered what they had ex



How happy she was!

pected, but instead of Elsie playing alone with nobody near her, they discovered that she had quite an audience—a ring of interested workmen gathered round listening in raptures to Mrs. Thompson's daughter playing the " Bluebells of Scotland " on the lovely grand piano.

How happy she was!

She has a grand piano of her own now and it is not easy to keep her away from it. But she is always a welcome visitor to No. 47.

Pinkums: An Owl

When he was quite little, Tod did not like to go to sleep alone in the dark. He was not afraid, but still he did not like it very much.

Now he is a year older and a year braver, and next year he says that he will not mind *how* dark the good-night darkness may be; but, for just this winter-time, he is glad to have Pinkums.

Pinkums is an owl. He is not a live fluffy feather owl, but a china owl, almost exactly like real. He stands on the chest of drawers in Tod's room, beside

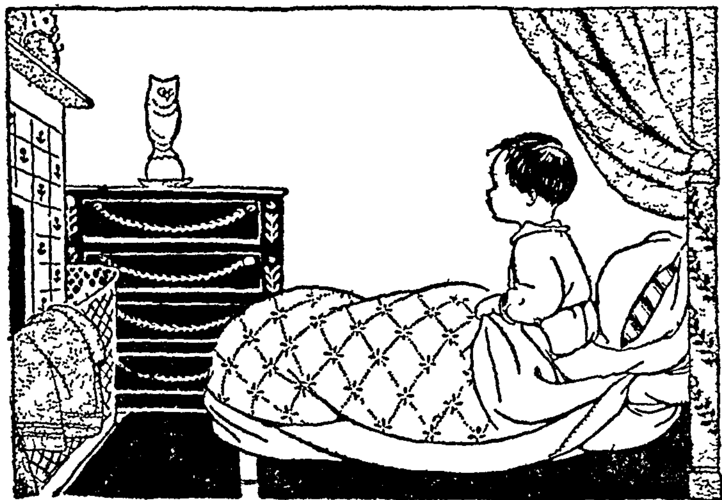
the fire-place, with smoothed-down wings and a very wise 'spression and very big round eyes. He is friendly too to look at.

When Mother has said good-night and the go-to-bed light is put out and the dark begins, there's Pinkums—resting with two firm little claws on a little ball of a lamp that glows with a warm and cosy light all by itself, and shows him there, plain as plain could be.

Sometimes, just before Tod goes to sleep, they nod and at each other; at any rate he no at Pinkums, and he is sure tha Pinkums nods back very friendly indeed.

Next year and always, even when Tod is *quite* brave, he means to keep Pinkums for old times' sake!

(Good night, Pinkums!)





The New Dress

Molly was quite a little girl. She had a doll with yellow hair, named Florrie, and a kitten with a ginger coat, named Fluff.

One day Auntie Olive gave Molly a pretty piece of silk for a dress for Florrie. Mummy cut out the dress and Molly sewed

the seams and made the sleeves.

Mummy helped her to finish the frock. Then Molly put it on Florrie, and I can tell you that doll looked very fine indeed.

" She ought to sit in your room, Mummy, she looks so nice," said Molly.

" Oh, very well then," said Mummy. " She may sit there if she is good."

So Molly propped Florrie against the wall in Mummy's room just by the window. " Be good, dear," she said. Then she went away to feed her brother's rabbit.

When Molly came back, Florrie had not moved an inch;



Fluff in Mischief

but, dear me, there was
ink-stain on the new
Molly was so upset when
this that she burst into tea

" Dear me, what is the
asked Mummy, coming i
room. And at that moment a
mew was heard.

That came from Fluff, who wanted to creep away from the room and could not, because the door was shut. He had ink on his paws, and looked rather frightened.

"Look," said Mummy to Molly, "it is Fluff who has been naughty, and not your dolly. He has pulled at the cloth on this table and brought the ink bottle to the floor."

That was exactly what had happened, and Molly felt better when she knew that Florrie had not been naughty.

Mummy scolded Fluff a little bit, but not very much; for you cannot expect kittens to have

much sense. Mummy did say that Fluff must not be allowed to play any more in a room where there was ink.

The new frock was quite spoilt, but Auntie Olive gave Florrie a new frock with blue frills, quite a party frock.

So Molly was pleased and happy, and so was Florrie. Indeed, Florrie liked the blue frock better than the other one, though she did not say a word.